

Number 18 (2 - 9)

Copy of the "GRACE JOURNAL"

"Preaching grace in the Dispensation of grace"
A Bible Study

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HARVEST TIME

BY RICHARD JORDAN

"And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her?"

"The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men,

"Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?"

"Then they went out of the city, and came unto him.

"In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat.

"But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of.

"Therefore said the disciples one to another, hath any man brought him ought to eat?"

"Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

"Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.

"And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.

"And here in is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.

"I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labor: other men labored, and ye are entered into their labors" (John 4:27-38).

How little the disciples seemed to know of that with which their Lord was truly occupied. Thinking first of the body and its temporal wants, they were seemingly

unaware of what filled His heart—that “*other meat*” which satisfied and refreshed His soul.

As the crowds from the city were approaching, He points to them and says, in essence, to the disciples, “You are thinking about physical food, but my heart is on a spiritual harvest. Look out over the masses—look and see the spiritual harvest that is ready for reaping! Look at these poor unsaved Samaritans who are so ready and eager to hear the gospel and be saved: The fields are indeed white--so get busy! Do something about it!”

The verses which follow demonstrate just how genuinely ready the Samaritans were to hear the word of the Messiah--and how He did not disappoint them, but abode with them two days seeing many believe on Him. All of this, however, poses a difficulty for the careful Bible student for it surely stands in striking contrast to His subsequent instructions that His apostles were *not* to preach to them. His orders are very clear:

"These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, GO NOT INTO THE WAY OF THE GENTILES, AND INTO ANY CITY OF THE SAMARITANS ENTER YE NOT:

“BUT GO RATHER TO THE LOST SHEEP OF THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL” (Matt. 10:5, 6).

If the Samaritans were “*white already unto harvest*,” why would He so pointedly forbid His apostles permission to preach to them, limiting their ministry rather to *only* “the lost sheep of the house of Israel”? For the answer to this question we must remember the special place the nation Israel occupied in the purpose and program of God. In fact, our Lord had already made this very point abundantly clear to the Samaritan woman, telling her:

"Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for SALVATION IS OF THE JEWS" (John 4:22).

Christ's words to His disciples that “*other men labored, and ye are entered into their labors*” (John 4:38) fit in here. The ministry of our Lord and His disciples was simply the continuation of the long standing program of God based on the Abrahamic Covenant and amplified in countless Old Testament prophecies. According to covenant and prophecy, salvation and blessing

Were to go to the Gentiles *through redeemed Israel*, that the Gentiles were--and are--to be blessed through the *rise* of Israel in kingdom glory. Consider just two sample passages

". . . by myself have I sworn, saith the Lord. . .

". . . in blessing will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

“.AND IN THY SEED SHALL ALL THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH BE BLESSED...” (Gen.22:16-18).

"Arise and shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.

"For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people, BUT THE LORD SHALL ARISE UPON THEE, AND HIS GLORY SHALL BE SEEN UPON THEE.

“AND THE GENTILES SHALL COME TO THY LIGHT, AND KINGS TO THE BRIGHTNESS OF THY RISING” (Isa.60:1-3).

Thus we see that the nation Israel is to be given *supremacy* over the nations so that, in turn, those nations may be blessed through Israel's *instrumentality* (e.g., Zech.8:13,22,23). God's purpose in saving and blessing Israel was to make her a *channel* through which that salvation and blessing could then go to "*all the nations of the earth.*"

The "*will*" and "*work*" of the Father which Christ came to accomplish did indeed include the Samaritans and the Gentiles. This is why we find Christ telling His disciples of the spiritual harvest which was ready among the Samaritans. But *how* was this harvest to be reaped? By the nation Israel. Before the message could go to Samaria and the Gentiles, that favored nation must *first* believe it. Here, of course, was the real problem, for though the Samaritans were ready to believe, Israel obstinately refused to heed the repeated call for her repentance, finally even demanding that her Messiah be crucified.

In His post-resurrection instructions Christ puts into words what He illustrated in His actions at Samaria:

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto me the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Christ went to Samaria because He was going to tell His apostles to go there. He also dealt with two Gentiles (Matt 15:21-28 and Luke 7: 1-10. Notice that in the case of the former, blessing came only when she took her place under Israel's "*table*" and in the latter, the centurion is said to be "*worthy*" *because* he had blessed Israel. Christ's ministry to the Samaritans, the Syrophenician woman and the Roman

centurion was all designed to use unusual circumstances to demonstrate the *wider* purposes of God.) during His earthly ministry for similar reasons.

After His ascension the apostles were to "*preach the gospel* (i.e. "the gospel of the kingdom" Cf' Matt. 24:14). *to every creature*" (Mark 16: 15). The *order* of their ministry was clearly given: Jerusalem *first*, (See Luke 24:4?). then all Judaea, and finally, Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth. Thus, in time, all were to hear "the word of the kingdom."

In the events of John 4 Christ illustrated His program for blessing the nations and He demonstrated that Samaritans would believe on Israel's Messiah-King. The will of the Father was that *all* come to repentance; the *order* was Israel first, for this was God's *order* of blessing under the prophetic program. Hence, shortly after Pentecost, Peter tells the nation:

"Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.

"UNTO YOU FIRST God, having raised up His Son Jesus, SENT HIM TO BLESS YOU, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities" (Acts 3:25,26).

How different things are when we come to the Apostle Paul and the dispensation of grace. From Paul we learn that the "*middle wall of partition*" has been broken down and God no longer recognizes religious and national distinctions. No longer is salvation offered through the *rise* of Israel. Now, we read:

". . . rather THROUGH THEIR [ISRAEL'S] FALL salvation is come unto the Gentiles. .." (Rom. 11:11).

The nation Israel has been temporarily set aside by God and thus its importance to the nations of the earth has diminished. God has *interrupted* the prophetic program with "*the mystery*" revealed by Christ through Paul (Eph. 3:1-9; Col. 1:24-26) and now God's blessing is extended to all mankind without distinctions or exceptions, for now "there is *no difference* between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him" (Rom. 10:12).

Today the riches of God's grace have been clearly demonstrated and all that has been accomplished for us through the cross-work of the Lord Jesus Christ has been fully manifested. Thus we are told, by Paul:

"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

"For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;

"Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;

"And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby" (Eph.2:13-16).

"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal.3:26-28).

All that anyone needs today to come to God is simple faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ in his behalf. One's nationality, religious standing, social pedigree—nothing of self will avail. In the words of the hymn writer:

Nothing in my hand I bring,

Simply to thy cross I cling.

We should not forget that this wonderful message of grace is only found in the ministry and message committed by our ascended Lord to the Apostle Paul. He is "*the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles*" (Rom. 15:16) and he alone declares:

.....I SPEAK TO YOU GENTILES, IN AS MUCH AS I AM THE APOSTLE OF THE GENTILES, I magnify mine office" (Rom. 11:13).

Nor should we forget that this message has been committed *to us*. If even in our Lord's day the fields were "*white already to harvest,*" *how* much more so today when all distinctions have been removed and the riches of His grace shed forth. Oh that we would take to heart Paul's exhortation that "*now is the day of salvation*" (II Cor. 6:2)—remembering that it was written in light of *our* great commission (I Cor. 5:14-21).

Let's bend every effort to reach every person possible with the gospel of grace while there is still opportunity to do so. Then, as laborers together with God, we can say with Paul; "I have planted, Apollos watered; but *God gave the increase*" (I Cor. 3:6). Surely He is faithful to do His part as we do ours:

"And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Gal. 6:9).



WHAT WE TEACH

at

Grace School of the Bible

We believe that Eph. 4:1-6 sets forth the doctrinal basis necessary for fellowship in the dispensation of grace. Since, however, there are many areas of doctrine which are of specific interest to believers, we have a formal, detailed statement concerning what we teach. Over the next few months we will publish this statement in the *Grace Journal*. The following is part one:

God's Revelation of Himself to Man

1. We teach that God has revealed His person and His will to man in various ways through the ages. He has done this through nature (Psa. 19:1, Rom. 1: 18-20), through special revelation to individuals (Matt 16:17, Gal. 1:11,12; 2:2), and through His written Word (II Tim. 3:16). We further teach that with the completion of God's written Word all special revelation ceased (I Cor. 13:8-10, Col. 1:25). God's person is revealed today through nature and the written Word and His specific will for the lives of believers is revealed exclusively through the written Word.

2. We teach that God the Holy Spirit verbally inspired 39 books of the Old Testament and 27 books of the New Testament (II Tim. 3:16,17, II Pet. 1:20,21). That is, God dictated the individual words of Scripture through human authors so that the individual words they used were the words God intended them to use (Matt. 4:4; 5:17,18; 24:35, I Cor. 2: 13). We further teach that these God inspired words are absolutely infallible and are the final authority in faith and life.

3. We teach that in addition to inspiring His Word, God has preserved His Word through history so that we do possess today the complete infallible Word of God (Psa. 12:6,7, Isa. 30:8). This preservation has been carried out by God's people (Ezra 7:6, Rom. 3:1, 2, I Tim.3:15). This preserved text exists today in the Massoretic text of the Old Testament and the Received Text of the New Testament. We further teach that the *Authorized Version*, commonly known as the *King James Version*, is the proper and authoritative English translation of these texts.

"IF GOD BE FOR US"

"If God be for us, who can be against us?" asks the Apostle in Romans 8 and the chapter demonstrates how fully the triune God is indeed *"for us."* In verse 26 we see the Holy Spirit *"for us."* In verse 31 we find the Father *"for us."* Then in verse 34 Christ is said to be *"for us"*.

The Godhead is *"for us"* in our weakness, in our sickness, in our moment of loss and despair. When we doubt, God is still *"for us"*. When we fail, He is *"for us."* When we fall, God is *"for us."* There is no time, no place, no condition in which God is not *"for*

us." Such assurance should cause us to take courage and press on with confidence in Him alone!

Strength does not rise out of the inferiority or superiority, the presence or the absence of our adversaries. It is not who is against us but who is "for us" that matters! And how do we know, how can we be assured that God is ever *for us*? The objective evidence unanswerably demonstrated in human history is given in the inspired words of verse 32:

"He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

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Faith is not optimism, it is not determination, it is not wishing hard, it is not feeling confident-faith is *believing* God.

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God'(Rom. 10:17).

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DID YOU NOTICE THE CHANGE?

Another indication that Israel was set aside and the Body of Christ began with the conversion and commissioning of the Apostle Paul is the change in the order of baptism set forth in the Book of Acts.

In Acts 2:38 under the kingdom message, the order for baptism was *water first* for salvation, then *spirit* for power, tongues, etc. However, after Paul's salvation and commissioning this order is *reversed*. In Acts 10:44-48 *first the Spirit* is given, *then water*. This reversal paves the way for the "*one baptism*" of Ephesians 4:5.
